R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 014 340 RC 001 732

THE DIVERSE NEEDS OF THE LEARNERS TO BE SERVED.

BY- HEFFERNAN, HELEN

PUB DATE 2 OCT 67

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.96 22P.

DESCRIPTORS- FAMILY SCHOOL RELATIONSHIP, SCHOOL ORGANIZATION, *INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES, *INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT, BILINGUAL STUDENTS, *SOCIAL DIFFERENCES, *INDIVIDUAL INSTRUCTION, MIGRANT CHILDREN, EDUCATIONALLY DISADVANTAGED, PRESCHOOL EDUCATION, *INDIVIDUAL NEEDS,

ONE OF THE GOALS OF EDUCATION IS HELPING EVERY LEARNER ACHIEVE HIS INDIVIDUAL POTENTIAL. IN DIRECTING EFFORT TOWARD THIS GOAL, EDUCATIONAL LEADERS MUST IDENTIFY AND MEET DIVERSE NEEDS IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS--(1) THE MATURITY OF THE LEARNER, (2) HIS PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT, (3) HIS FAMILY BACKGROUND, (4) HIS PHYSICAL CONDITION, AND (5) INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN ABILITY, INTEREST, APTITUDE, AND ASPIRATION. ENROLLMENT GROWTH IN JUNIOR COLLEGES AND ADULT EDUCATION CLASSES, INCREASED EMPHASIS ON EDUCATION OF THE DISADVANTAGED, AND PRE-SCHOOL PROGRAMS ARE CITED AS TRENDS IN EDUCATION IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. CHILDREN FROM HOMES OF POVERTY, MIGRANT CHILDREN, AND CHILDREN WHOSE PARENTS SPEAK ANOTHER LANGUAGE PRESENT DIFFERENT KINDS OF EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES TO THE SCHOOLS. THE MAJOR RESPONSIBILITY IS SEEN AS THE PREVENTION OF FAILURE. THIS REQUIRES LEARNING ACTIVITIES WHICH ARE HIGHLY INDIVIDUALIZED, FREEDOM FROM RIGID GRADE STANDARDS, AND A CLOSER HOME SCHOOL RELATIONSHIP. THIS SPEECH WAS DELIVERED AT THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON RURAL EDUCATION AT OKLAHOMA CITY ON OCTOBER 2, 1967. (SF)

Department of Rural Education, NEA
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma Oct. 2, 1967

Helen Heffernan
3416 Land Park Drive
Sacramento, Calif. 95818

ED014340

The Diverse Needs of the Learners to Be Served

Helen Heffernan

Throughout our country, an almost continuous process of professional conferencing on educational questions is going on. Attractive announcements appear in every mail and in every journal concerning carefully designed programs on a wide diversity of educational issues and services. Such a completely dedicated pursuit in search of means to meet the educational needs of our country has certainly never been matched or exceeded in the history of education.

But among all these earnest groups, whether their focus be on human growth and development, on physical and mental health, on curriculum from nursery school to adult education, on learners and the learning process, on discrete subject-matter fields, on research, on home-school-community relations, on organization and administration of schools, on school plant facilities, no group encompasses all educational concerns more completely than a group meeting as the Department of Rural Education, National Education Association.

As one of a triumvirate assigned to look at The Task We Face, I approached my part of this task with confidence. Long professional association with the first speaker, opportunity to share our mutually cherished beliefs about the social significance of education were reassuring. Schools have a dual role (1) of helping every learner to achieve his individual potential, and (2) of keeping us a nation of free people dedicated to democratic principles and ideals. Without such goals our efforts are meaningless and lack direction. With them, education will continue to make the same astonishing progress in the last third that we made in the first two-thirds of the twentieth century.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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But all of us deeply concerned with education, professing the same ideals, must seek constantly to lead. It is not possible to lead unless we know where we are going. Our previous speaker has given us a road map. But a road map is useless unless we watch the rest of the traffic, select the right corners to turn, keep our eyes on the road, and never lose sight of our distant goals.

These are times that call for wide-open eyes and no blinders; wide-open minds and no prejudices; wide-open horizons with no limiting high hedges of our own making; and wide-open hearts in which the children and youth and adults we serve can find security and cherishing and caring. Not <u>some</u> children and youth and adults but <u>all</u> of them. This is the way of democracy.

Who are these people the school serves? Why do they have diverse needs that schools are challenged first to identify and then to meet? What are the bases of diversity in human beings?

At least five bases of diversity seem inescapable in meeting the task we face. These include:

1. The maturity of the learner
2. The physical and social environment
3. The family background of the learner
4. The physical condition of the learner
5. Individual differences in ability, interest, aptitude and aspiration

There may well be other bases for diversity; some of these may appear as sub-heads of the five we will attempt to examine a little further.

1. <u>The Maturity of the Learner</u>

The maturity of the learner is one of the primary conditions that creates diverse needs. During the twentieth century, we have modified our ideas from time to time concerning the age of the learners to be served.

At the beginning of the century, the average attendance of pupils in the elementary schools was four and a half years. The dropouts occurred in the fourth and fifth grades. In 1967 more than 98 percent of the elementary-school-age population is attending a six- or eight-year elementary school.

At the beginning of the century, a very small percent of our young people had access to secondary education--probably less than ten percent. Now, every young person can attend a secondary school, about 70 percent graduate, and it is reliably predicted that by 1970 very nearly all high-school-age youth will be in high school until they complete a twelve-year public school education.

What has happened in elementary and secondary schools during this century justifies great pride in our national achievement. But this achievement is evidence that the American people have boundless faith in education as the avenue of social mobility--the way that has kept the doors of opportunity open for our young people.

The diverse needs the schools must serve have been expanding by a growing demand for widely accessible educational opportunity at thirteenth and fourteenth grade levels to provide a junior college, or what is coming more frequently to be called a community college. Such a community college is designed to provide either the lower division collegiate program or terminal technical training leading to business or industry.

As we think of the expansion of educational opportunity upward, we cannot escape the most serious consideration of adult education. The modern point of view is that education is a life-long process. The years of formal schooling are designed primarily to begin the process of education

rather than complete it. Because of this, education throughout our schools must be geared to the concepts of learning how to learn and to gaining genuine satisfaction in learning so that the individual will wish to continue learning throughout life.

There is not a community, large or small, in our country but could profit from imaginative, community-wide undertakings in civic education, in developing civic competence, in consumer education, in family life education, in human relations and in the understanding of world affairs. Education falls far short of meeting the needs of adults when they can find nothing more interesting to do in the evening than to view the blood, brutality and aggression provided by most of the commercial television programs. In no area of education have we less reason for congratulation than in the field of adult education.

The upsurge of interest in the problem of the disadvantaged segment of American society was probably triggered by Michael Haggerty, in his book: The Other America, which was first published serially in The New Yorker and later in book form. Since the end of World War II, our citizens had been deluded by the myth of our affluent society. People generally believed that poverty--the great enemy of advancing civilization had been banished forever. But Michael Haggerty burst the bubble of bigness and betterness and everyone rich. On the basis of thoroughly reliable studies he proved that about a quarter of our people are living at a substandard level and about a fifth have fallen into the abyss of abject, dismal, hopless poverty.

The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 was the first evidence that the President and Congress of the United States had gotten the message.

The Act made provision for a variety of opportunities but perhaps the most spectacularly successful was the Head Start Program.

Research had been going on for a long time on the importance of the early years of life. Slowly, since the first kindergarten was established in Watertown, Wisconsin in 1855, kindergarten education had been extended. By 1962 about half the kindergarten-age-children of the country had a kindergarten available to them. Most of these children lived in city school districts. But, by and large, these were not the kind of kindergarten that people envisioned who worked hard over the years for their establishment. In the interest of economy, and not in the interest of children, teachers were assigned 60 children in two sessions of 30 children each, one group reporting for 150 minutes in the morning and a similar group in the afternoon. In general, this organization was accepted throughout the country in spite of the fact that such overcrowding was a constant threat to effective functioning of a kindergarten and to the growth of young children.

Obviously these conditions defeated kindergarten programs and kindergarten teachers. No teacher could know 60 five-year-olds well enough as persons to meet their individual needs as these young children were making their first adjustment to complex group life. Work with parents was impossible because of lack of time and energy. Kindergartens became regimented. Children were pushed, rushed, crowded and unsuitable activities were imposed "to keep them quiet." Imagination, creativity, sensitivity, flexibility, curiosity are completely lost under these conditions. Good kindergarten teachers asked for transfer to a primary grade. Prospective kindergarten teachers were deterred from entering a profession which made such unrealistic and self-defeating demands.

In 1964, the Congress passed the Economic Opportunity Act and by the summer of 1965, Head Start programs were offered to help socio-economically disadvantaged children, who would start school in the Fall, to acquire some of the knowledge, habits and attitudes which would facilitate their successful adjustment to the school situation.

During the summer of 1965, Head Start programs served more than half a million children chiefly in congested, urban areas. Rarely has any educational program stimulated greater public interest. Many newspapers carried well-illustrated full-page reports of their local programs. The outcomes were so helpful not only to the children but to the parents as well that many communities organized to continue the program on a year round basis.

The initiation of Head Start has already influenced the status of Kindergarten Education. In 1957, Rhode Island decreed that all school districts must have kindergartens, Maryland made state aid available for kindergarten, as did Missouri.

Since most of our national organizations concerned with education are now on record as approving opportunity for public education beginning at age 3, we may anticipate accelerated development of programs for all young children, regardless of economic status in the years immediately ahead. Continuation of Head Start programs for socio-economically disadvantaged children alone will result in a form of segregation based on poverty--another intolerable basis for classification of human beings. The alternative is the extension of educational opportunity to all young children. If we need justification, we have it, in the statement of Benjamin S. Bloom[1] of the University of Chicago as the result of his long years

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[1]Benjamin S. Bloom, Stability and Change in Human Characteristics, New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1964, p. 5.

of research. He says that

> ...the most rapid period of development appears to be the first five years of life.

In addressing the American Association of School Administrators in 1966, Dr. Bloom said further

> ...by age 9 (grade 3) at least 50 percent of the general achievement pattern at age 18 (grade 12) has been developed....Studies of vocabulary development suggests that about one-third has been developed by the time the individual has entered school.

These early years are years of experience getting and must not be considered an opportunity to put pressure on the very young for formal learning.

And, so we may conclude that education in the twentieth century has become a "cradle to the grave" proposition. In fact, Education, USA Washington Monitor (September 18, 1967, page 17) announces "that a new project, innocuously called Parent and Child" "which moves the Head Start concept clear down to the prenatal period, is about to get off the ground" as a pilot project in 30 selected cities this fall.

2. The Physical and Social Environment of the Learner

Much has been said about the effect of the environmental setting in creating diverse needs. The rural setting, as all who have worked in it know, has advantages and disadvantages. We know that every person's mind is made by the environment in which he lives and so in providing good education for rural people we must assess and utilize the advantages and compensate for the disadvantages.

What are some of the significant advantages of rural life? City dwellers probably do not fully realize how much the noise, the clutter, the crowds threaten their effective functioning and the growth of their

children. Rural life can provide an environment for the young that is not overstimulating and that does not destroy interest and zest for living.

Rural life is not yet dominated by the machine that threatens to dehumanize city dwellers. Are we all to become slots on IBM cards? What happens to imagination, creativity, and curiosity when man's life is completely regulated by the machine?

City life becomes increasingly artificial; the experiences of city people are mostly secondhand. Newspapers, radio and television commentators select what they wish us to know about the world and it comes filtered through the particular biases of the writer or commentator and frequently determined by the particular ax he has to grind. In the process, the sensitivity of the receiver gets dulled.

City life is fragmented. We do a lot of idle talking about "the generation gap." In this we deny history; we think and live as though man had no previous history on which to draw. We forget the hard won "funded capital of civilization."

On the other hand, the conditions of the rural environment make possible a close and continuing relationship with natural things, a constant realization of man's oneness with his natural universe. Perhaps we have taken "the native values of rural life" somewhat for granted. Now, it becomes crucial that we learn to understand and cooperate with the natural order. Survival depends upon it. And, thus, we may find a deeper and richer reality in a wider universe.

The applications to education are obvious, they include greater emphasis on science based on the natural environment at all levels, realistic agricultural education, forestry education, propagation of ornamental

plants, gardening. All these fields open vistas of cultural and vocational education. Becoming one with the natural environment has implications for expansion of outdoor education so that more of our people will have restored for them their unity with the physical and biological nature of things, will widen their sensitivity to beauty and renew their spirits much in need of renewing in a world deeply distressed because of man's lack of judgment and wisdom in ordering his relationships to nature and to mankind.

The minus side of the assessment of the rural environment is of much less significance in these days of instantaneous communication and rapid transportation. We can use these instruments of communication to bring into every classroom vivid pictures of life in distant lands, industrial processes, scientific experimentation, works of art, musical compositions, dramatic presentations to enrich the lives of rural children and adults. More and more, schools are taking children on study trips and even more ambitious journeys so that may have actual firsthand experiences.

Utilization of the assets of the rural environment lies largely in the hands of the educational leadership. Rural schools need not replicate urban schools but must build courageously on the strengths inherent in their own environment.

Compensation for the cultural limitations of the rural environment calls for ingenious, imaginative, creative solutions. But, can we support these solutions financially? With 7 percent of the world's population and 55 percent of the world's wealth, we can have any kind of educational program the people of this country want. We may need a vigorous restatement of our political theory that the people of this country create the wealth of this country and may use the legal political channels available to spend this wealth in the public interest.

3. The Family Background of the Learner

Many of the ideas already mentioned bearing on the diverse needs of learners have their origin in the family background of the child. For example, the fact that the parents have selected to live in a rural environment which may give school people some cues concerning the values held by particular families.

Children from Homes of Poverty. The problem of poverty, which was the target of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, impinges heavily on the family background of the learner. In 1951, the Commissioner of Education[1] commented on the Report of the Subcommittee on Low Income Families of the Joint Committee on the Economic Report in these words:

> ...the close relationship between low income and sickness and disease, low income and lack of educational opportunity, low income and any basic sense of security....Poverty breeds ignorance and disease. But ignorance and disease breed poverty. Essentially it is a vicious circle, one in which not only individuals and families are caught but large and important sections of our population. Those states that have the poorest schools, the fewest hospitals and public health services, have also the lowest per capita income.

What can schools in rural areas do to break "the vicious circle of poverty?" The question can probably be answered by telling what one community has actually attempted to meet the problems of children who had fewer advantages. This is the story[2] as it was told to me on September 7, 1967:

> When Federal funds became available in December, 1965, we made a survey of our children and their needs. Then, a

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[1] Federal Security Agency, Report of the Commissioner of Education, 1951, p. 22.

[2] Part of the discussion with Mrs. Thelma Gomez, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Tulare (California) School District.

small group of teachers, administrators, supervisors, and consultants had a brain-storming session and came out with some ideas that seemed to have merit and to be feasible in terms of district resources. We were concerned about overcoming some of the social and emotional inadequacies that are partially responsible for the failure of these children. Some of these dreams have been realized so we can look back with some satisfaction and look ahead with great expectations.

Because of the reduction in funds we have found it necessary to curtail or eliminate some of our programs. We have dropped the supplementary reading program. This program stressed reading for enjoyment. In this program, each child was given a book at his reading level each month and then permitted to take it home to become a part of his personal library. For some children these books were their first truly personal possession. They took great pride in ownership and reading interests developed in a gratifying manner.

We are continuing our program for three and four-year-old children. This program was started in 1963 with funds made available by the Rosenberg Foundation. It has tripled in enrollment. We have on-the-spot evidence of the accuracy of the research by Bloom and Deutsch.

Unfortunately the teacher-aide program was also cut due to lack of funds. In our two target schools, however, we still provide teachers with a limited amount of service. We use the aides in classrooms working with the children in co-teaching situations; they are not used as housekeeping aides or to produce more "pale purple ditto sheets."

Our Widening Horizons program was first started in this district with funds from the Rosenberg Foundation. This is a travel-study program for children in grades five through eight. During the summer a selected group of 60-70 boys and girls spend six weeks exploring some of the wonders of our State. They travel and see farmers' markets, music centers, art museums, industrial plants, historic centers of interest. During the school year on extended week ends, fifth grade children visit historic spots, the beach, the mountains.

The value of these programs is apparent in the quality of the children's poetry and stories and other forms of creative expression. Too often we expect output from children when there has been no input.

We are deeply concerned about the health of our children. During the first year 197 pupils were given comprehensive physical examinations. All were given hearing, vision,

and dental examinations. The nurse and health aide carried on extensive follow-up work with the parents. A study of nutrition was made and supplements needed were determined. Nutrition classes were set up for parents.

Ninety percent of the children examined showed low hemoglobin to an extent that medication was needed. Working through parents and local physicians surgical help was secured--cases of infected tonsils, hernia, strabismus, and others were cared for. Parents were uniformly grateful for this help and suggested that a "Help Another Child Health Fund" be set up to which everyone would make whatever contributions he was able to make. In this way, the health needs of additional children were met.

A parent education program was carried on by means of study trips. The parents were as impoverished in experiences as the children. The district provided a study trip for parents every Thursday to some point of interest to them as parents and citizens. A sympathetic guide helped them to understand the experiences.

In June 1967 one of the parents wrote a letter concerning her experience. The letter was in Spanish but was translated by one of the aides. This is a "proof of the pudding" kind of evaluation because the life of this woman was changed because of the program. Here is a translation of the letter:

Dear Mrs. Gomez:

I wish to express my gratitude to Mrs. Gladys Hunt for having this wonderful program, also, to Mary Garcia, who always invited us on field trips, workshops, films, and night school classes. Since I have been taking part in this program, I feel that I am no longer in the dark.

We visit high schools and colleges. I realize how much our children can learn because it is there within reach. Education means more to me now than before.

We are a family of fifteen, twelve children, my husband, my mother and myself. We have always worked in the fields; we followed the crops from one place to another.

My children were always late entering school because we had to finish the harvest. Our greatest concern then was to feed and clothe our children so they were always late starting school. They never started until mid-November. My husband wouldn't let them start sooner.

As I said before, education began to mean more to me and I worried about my children. I began to talk and talk to my

husband about letting the children start school in September, like they were supposed to.

Since I got nowhere with him, I took a step that I have never done before--to go against my husband's wishes in stubbornness! I went to the high school principal; I told him what my problem was. He was very understanding and said he would talk to my husband. He did. My husband told the principal that he needed the boys to work because he couldn't support all fifteen of us by himself.

The principal told him he could get help through Welfare. Of course, we wouldn't hear of it because our children are our responsibility and nobody else's. At last, we said we would accept help when we needed it and our boys started school in October--still late.

Then last September--in 1966-- I went to see the principal again, and asked him to talk to my husband again about letting the children start school in September. Well, the school sent for him. I don't know what they said to him. But when my husband returned home from school, he said to me that we better buy the children their school clothing so they can start school. I tell you this is the first time in years that they started school in September. I now have two boys and one girl in the tenth grade, then on down to Head Start. All this was made possible because of this wonderful program. I am very grateful. I have learned a lot.

The field trip was something I look forward to; talking to the other ladies and hearing them talk mostly about the education of their children. We all want our children to be educated so they can find a place in their community and be better citizens.

Also, I enjoy the workshops very much. I used to sew a little but since I took part in the sewing workshop, where Mrs. Proust gave lessons in sewing and also on how to buy materials, I now sew more. I have been sewing children's clothes and selling them. I make most of my clothes and my mother's and my children's.

I could go on and on, telling you the things I have learned and enjoyed, not only myself but the children as well on these field trips. I took care of five of the preschool children on the trips. At first, they were shy, but soon came out of their shells; now they are friendly and happy and eager to start school. They love the bus rides, the trip to the dairy, the zoo and the parks. My husband and I do not speak

English. We started nightschool classes, thanks to Mary for inviting us.

I know that by attending school we will be able to understand our children and help them. We are buying a home. Now, we will plant our roots here and be part of the community and school. Thank you, thank you for the parent and community relations program, and to Mrs. Gladys Kent, for her understanding kindness. She is truly a wonderful person.

Respectfully,

(Parent's name)

No doubt stories like this could be told about hundreds and hundreds of communities. The secret of helping people who are in trouble is in wanting to help them; really caring about what happens to other human beings.

The Children of Seasonal Workers. Family stability is usually considered of great importance in promoting normal growth and development in children. But throughout the twentieth century, the most challenging problem confronting rural educators in many states has been the children of seasonal agricultural workers whose families drift from crop to crop.

A quarter to a half million of our children are involved. These are the children of parents who are received with open arms when the crop is ready for harvest and are socially rejected and urged "to be on your way" when the job is completed.

The plight of these children makes it imperative to use all the resources at our command under the Economic Opportunity Act, and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in meeting the problem. Because basic economic conditions seem to require these migrant families, State funds also should be available.

For many decades we have sought a cure for this problem which is devastating to families and children. It has been said that there is no

cure except the elimination of migrancy but that desirable solution still lies far in the distance.

Every child is entitled to full educational opportunity available to other children. The migrant child belongs to the Nation's most educationally underprivileged. To use one State as an example, although lay and professional people in California have worked zealously on this problem at least since 1925, a survey made in 1961 indicated that migrant children were a year or more retarded in school achievement. These children were served by 6.6 more teachers who were not fully qualified than the percent of such employment throughout the State and that 27.5 percent of the districts maintained a half day session which is approximately 20 percent higher than the State percent and 25 percent of the schools reported their buildings to be inadequate. Obviously, these children are the victims of discrimination.

The problem has had the interest and active support of the United States Office of Education which over the years has held national and regional conferences on the education migrant children and has published bulletins and reports. The Department of Rural Education, NEA, has maintained a continuing interest in the problem. In ~~the~~ 1954, the Department published The Education of Migrant Children by Shirley E. Greene and in 1960, sponsored the publication of Knowing and Teaching the Migrant Child by Elizabeth Sutton.

The results of State activities under EOA and ESEA are showing marked progress in meeting the diverse needs of migrant children. In a position paper prepared for presentation at the State Conference on Migrant Education

in Sacramento, California on September 23-24, 1966, Dr. Helen Cowan Wood[1] analyzed the educational needs of migrant children under eighteen headings as follows: equal opportunity, identification and citizenship, attitudes favorable to success, relevance and meaning, mastery of English, vocational guidance and education, better living, kindergarten and preschool programs, individualized learning programs, broadening background and interests, secondary education, adult education, continuity in the educational program, sufficient specialized personnel, adequate facilities and equipment, flexibility in educational arrangements, supplementary financing. This comprehensive list of educational needs of the children, youth, and adults engaged in seasonal agricultural labor might well be applied to all education but because of deprivation Dr. Wood makes a special application in each case to the unmet needs of the migrants.

Children from Homes in Which Another Language is Spoken. Children representing another need come from homes in which language other than English is exclusively spoken. They present a problem to teachers and schools where all instruction is given in the English language. The importance of helping these children to gain proficiency in the language of their adopted culture cannot be over-estimated. Although no educator would wish a child to lose command of his native language, his educational and vocational success in an English-speaking culture demands facility and fluency in the use of English.

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[1] Helen Cowan Wood. "The Educational Needs of Migrant Children." This paper was presented at the State Conference on Migrant Education in Sacramento, California on September 23-24, 1966. The conference was co-sponsored by the Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Office of Compensatory Education and the Inter-State Migrant Education Project, Title V, ESEA. Copies may be secured from the Office of Compensatory Education, Sacramento, California, 95814.

Acculturation of various foreign language groups is greatly influenced by parental attitudes. Certain cultures see the importance of early learning of English to the child's school success and support the efforts of the school by the use of English in the home as soon as the parents themselves gain facility with the language. Other cultures have strong emotional attachments to the native language and fear the separation from their children that the learning of another language in school might bring about.

Since instructional materials used in the schools of the United States are almost exclusively published in English, school people will probably need all the diplomacy at their command to meet a problem essentially rooted in the emotions of the parents.

Although this need has been apparent in our schools throughout the entire twentieth century as we received wave after wave of immigration from various countries, concentrated work on the problem is a relatively recent development. Research studies are under way in a number of centers on the teaching of English as a second language. The Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington, D.C has given effective leadership the the problem. Three conferences were held as follows: Tuscon, 1964; San Diego, 1965; New York, 1966. In Miami Beach in 1967, a national organization was formed called Teachers of English as a Second Language, which adds TESOL to our already bulging alphabetical vocabulary.

The Department of Rural Education has also been concerned with this problem and in 1966 published The Invisible Minority,[1] a report on the

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[1] The Invisible Minority. Washington, D.C.: Department of Rural Education, National Education Association, 1966.

NEA-Tuscon Survey on the teaching of Spanish to the Spanish-Speaking.

In any comprehensive discussion of the diverse needs of the learners to be served, consideration would be given to the difficult problems of needs rooted in racial differences in family background and in value systems held by the different classes in what many of us hope will eventually become a classless society. But neither your time nor my erudition makes this possible.

4. The Physical Condition of the Learner

Any illusions school people may have that in the United States "our children are the healthiest in history" will be swiftly dispelled by the comparative study made by Roul Tunley and reported under the title: "America's Unhealthy Children - an Emerging Scandal" in Harper's Magazine for May, 1966. It is probably unnecessary to defend the assumption that we cannot meet the needs of any child unless he is in reasonably good health.

Mr. Tunley makes his case in five brief statements:

> In 1950...we ranked sixth in deaths of babies per thousand births...according to WHO statistics for 1961, we have slid down to something like fifteenth place. (p. 42)
>
> Spokesmen for organized medicine...like to attribute our poor showing to our heavy Negro population compared, say, to Sweden or Holland. But there is no inherent reason why Negro babies should have a poorer prospect of survival than whites--except poverty and inferior prenatal care. This is the meaning of the striking statistical picture one finds in New York, where, in the predominantly white and reasonably affluent borough of Queens, infant deaths are 300 percent lower than in Negro Harlem. In Minnesota--where all races have equal access to first-class hospitals--infant mortality rates are identical for whites and nonwhites. (p. 42)
>
> The consequences of poor or inadequate prenatal care are reflected not only in infant deaths but also in those who survive with preventable defects. A high proportion of the two million mentally retarded children in the United States are born to poor families, and many of the defects could have

> been forestalled by simple medication and treatment before birth. Indeed, most authorities agree that retardation could be cut in half if we applied what we already know about such familiar hazards as faulty metabolism and German measles. (p. 43)
>
> Most advanced nations recognize that the care of children's teeth is crucially important; they provide free, or almost free dentistry for their young. Yet the richest nation in the world, according to a federal survey, allows half its youngsters to reach the age of fifteen without ever having seen the inside of a dentist's office. As a result half of all Americans in ther early teens have an average of ten decayed teeth in their mouths. Furthermore, one out of every five children in American suffers from a chronic ailment largely because of neglect.
>
> ...a recent Washington, D.C. study found that large numbers of first graders were failing because there were anemic and that the trouble with many nonreaders was they they couldn't see properly.

Nothing needs to be added to these quotations. If we really want to build a healthy nation and plan for the future, we must start with our children. Is this a proper concern of the schools? To be sure, it is, because we cannot attain our educational objectives unless the diverse health needs of our children are met.

Following Mr. Tunley's article in Harper's Magazine is a condensed statement from an article appearing in Medical World News (November 5, 1965). Within the past five years, five Boston hospitals have made comprehensive studies of 1,442 preschool children aged four to six who were enrolled in OEA Head Start projects. Over 31 percent exhibited major physical defects or emotional problems. To quote directly from this statement:

> A very wide range of physical pathology was uncovered, including cardiovascular deficit, broncho-pulmonary disfunction, orthopedic problems and diseases of the gastro-intestinal tract. Growth of some children was retarded as a result of metabolic disturbances or malnutrition; inadequate hearing or vision were extremely common....

> Most striking of all was the high rate of emotional disturbance. Nearly 25 percent of all the children had some sort of psychological difficulty, ranging from serious behavioral problems to psychoses.

This is part of the tragic picture revealed by the Boston study. Unfortunately in a study involving so many cases, we probably get an assessment of what is ~~probably~~ true nationwide. These 31 percent of the Head Start children will enter school with two strikes against them. Teachers and parents will put pressure on them to learn to read--the most difficult task they will ever have to achieve. Head Start should give us a chance to find those children who are desperately in need of medical care. These health needs of children, however, represent diverse needs which will determine whether they are learners or not. Children who are ill-nourished or suffer from some physical defect deviate from normal behavior patterns. The health of the Nation's children should be our greatest concern.

5. Individual Differences in Ability, Interests, and Aptitudes in Learners

Any thoughtful teacher will say that his greatest problem is in meeting the wide range of needs present in every classroom. The group with which the teacher works is composed of many different individuals each with his own peculiar needs. Apparently, educators never tire in attempting to devise some administrative arrangement to reduce the diversity in a classroom. The methods being tried by enthusiastic proponents today were tried in the 30's and discarded for a variety of reasons. Current efforts are unlikely to be more successful particularly if school people are truly concerned about the image a child gets of himself if he happens to fall into a group of so-called "retarded" or "slow" learners.

We need to think some new thoughts on this problem. First, we must work to see that every teacher has a teachable size class--not more than 25

at the maximum. Then, we must find the ways to help teachers to understand each child and to diagnose his individual learning needs. We must help teachers to accept the point of view that their task is to help each child take his next step successfully. The class group will have many group activities because children need to learn to live and work together, accept persons different from themselves and identify themselves with what is good for the group. But many of their specific learning activities will be highly individualized with each child working at his own rate toward goals he understands and with competent teacher guidance.

The teacher's major responsibility must be the prevention of failure. Within the classroom all children need not use the same textbook, each child need not use the same workbook but each child needs to have experiences of success. The great task of leadership is to free teachers from the limitations imposed by rigid grade standards. If we believe individuals differ from one another in every conceivable way, let us really put this belief into action. Obviously, if individual variation exists then everyone will not be able to do the same thing in the same amount of time and with an equal degree of competence.

Not only must we accept this as a principle to live by, not only must we help teachers to learn to live by it but we must help parents to understand and believe it and act courageously in accordance with their beliefs. The effect of parental expectancies that exceed a child's capacity is causing disastrous pressure on many children. In Children Under Pressure,[1] the warning is clearly given to those who will listen and hear before personal tragedy

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[1]Ronald C. Doll and Robert S. Fleming, Children Under Pressure, Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Books, Inc., 1966.

comes to any child or to his parents.

To meet the needs of children, we must stress the importance of developing a relationship between home and school in which parents and teachers are full partners in the program of education. If such a relationship can be developed, then eventually every school will become a community service center equipped to minister to a wide variety of human needs.

Other needs might be discussed if time permitted. The need of a curriculum which will prepare tomorrow's citizens to be effective in the preservation of our democratic way of life, successful homemakers, persons thoroughly informed concerning the seriousness of our internal problems of human relations as well as our world relations, human beings who think well of themselves and thus can accept differences in other people and treat them with dignity, respect and justice, persons prepared to make a living, persons able to use leisure constructively, and to adjust to life in a technological civilization. But these are the basic and common needs that good education strives constantly to meet.